

SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Vermillion School District Continuous Improvement Monitoring Process Report 2006-2007

Team Members: Valerie Johnson, Team Leader; Barb Boltjes, Penny McCormick-Gilles, Donna Huber, and Chris Sargent Education Specialists: Ray Tracy, Special Education Programs: Bev Petersen, Transition Liaison.

Dates of On Site Visit: March 19 & 20, 2007

Date of Report: March 29, 2007

This report contains the results of the steering committee's self-assessment and the validation of the self-assessment by Special Education Programs. The report addresses six principles – General Supervision, Free Appropriate Public Education, Appropriate Evaluation, Procedural Safeguards, Individualized Education Program and Least Restrictive Environment. Each principle is rated based on the following scale:

Promising Practice The district/agency exceeds this requirement through the implementation of innovative, high-quality programming and instructional practices.

Meets Requirements The district/agency consistently meets this requirement.

Out of Compliance The district/agency consistently does not meet this requirement.

Not applicable In a small number of cases, the standard may not be applicable for your district/agency. If an item is not applicable, the steering committee should briefly explain why the item is NA. Example – no private schools within the district boundaries.

Principle 1 – General Supervision

General supervision means the school district's administrative responsibilities to ensure federal and state regulations are implemented and a free appropriate public education is provided for each eligible child with a disability. The specific areas addressed in principle one are child find, referral procedures, children voluntarily enrolled by parents in private schools, students placed by the school district, improving results through performance goals and indicators (assessment, drop out, graduation), professional development, suspension and expulsion rates.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data Sources used:

Comprehensive Plan
Private School Staff Survey
Birth to 5 Data
TAT Data

Meets Requirements

The steering committee concluded that the Vermillion School District meets requirements for Child Find based on the district's comprehensive plan and data collected in the Birth to 5 program, the school district has an established and effectively implemented ongoing child find system to locate, identify and evaluate children with disabilities, ages birth through 21 years who may need special education.

The steering committee concluded the prerefferal systems at Austin Elementary and the Middle School appear to meet requirements effectively; the systems at Jolley Elementary and the high school needs improvement.

The steering committee concluded the school district meets requirements for providing children with disabilities that are eligible for special education services and are voluntarily placed in private schools by their parents in accordance with the IDEA with services and supports. The district, however, needs improvement in consulting with the private school representative about which children will receive services, and how the funds will be budgeted/expended.

Based on state suspension and expulsion data, the district has not had any suspension and expulsions reported in the last three years of children with disabilities. The district meets requirements by ensuring that policies/procedures are reviewed and analyzed, and decisions are made on an individual, case-by-case basis.

Based on the district's teacher surveys and needs assessment, most staff feels that they are adequately trained in classroom modifications. Also, curriculum and instruction staff development for both general and special education staff is planned annually. The district meets requirements for implementing procedures in personnel development.

Validation Results

Promising Practices:

The district has a well established community and parent involvement practice to assist the district with increasing student performance. The elementary schools have parent volunteers at several levels including classroom assistance, leaders for after school clubs (chess club) and tutoring. There is an annual parent's award banquet to recognize the contributions of these parent volunteers. The district also collaborates with the University of South Dakota to provide added experiences to the children through theme based units such as agricultural studies, medicine and business related activities. These experiences are taught by students and staff at the local university. The district is implementing a new community wide screening program which will also provide parents with education of local community resources with health and safety information for their children. This screening will incorporate booths from agencies such as USD Center for Children and Families, WIC, Vermillion Public Library, Vermillion P.T.A., Knutson Dental, USD Dental Hygiene, Sanford Health, Department of Social Services, Clay County Extension Office, United Way and all of the local preschools.

The district has sponsored an integrated preschool through the collaboration with HeadStart for 10 years. This preschool provides age appropriate learning activities and allows preschool children identified with disabilities to interact with same age peers by including the HeadStart children as a part of the preschool.

Meets Requirements

The monitoring team agrees with the steering committee data for Principle One, General Education.

Based on file reviews and interviews, the monitoring team feels the district meets requirements in the areas of prereferral and consulting with private schools and will move all areas under Principle One to Meets Requirements.

Principle 2 – Free Appropriate Public Education

All eligible children with disabilities are entitled to a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment. The specific areas addressed in principle two are the provision of FAPE to children residing in group homes, foster homes, or institutions, making FAPE available when a child reaches his/her 3rd birthday and providing FAPE to eligible children with disabilities who have been suspended or expelled from school for more than 10 cumulative days.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data Sources Used:

Comprehensive Plan
Suspension and Expulsion Information
Parent Surveys
Birth to 5 Data

Meets Requirements

The steering committee reported based on student files reviews and surveys, the district meets requirements in the area of FAPE.

Validation Results

Meets Requirements

The monitoring team agrees with the steering committee data for Principle Two, Free Appropriate Public Education as meeting the requirements.

Principle 3 – Appropriate Evaluation

A comprehensive evaluation is conducted by a team of knowledgeable staff, which also includes parental input. A valid and reliable evaluation will result in effective individualized education programs for eligible students. The specific areas addressed in principle three are written notice and consent for evaluation, evaluation procedures and instruments, eligibility determination, reevaluation and continuing eligibility.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data Sources Used:

Comprehensive Plan
Student File Reviews
Parent, Teacher Surveys

Meets Requirement

The steering committee concluded the Vermillion School District meets requirements for written notice and consent for evaluation based on student file reviews.

The steering committee concluded the district meets requirements by ensuring that evaluation or reevaluation procedures and instruments meet the minimum requirements.

The district meets requirements by ensuring that reevaluations are conducted in accordance with all procedural requirements.

Needs Improvement

The assessments on transition, however, have not be at the same level until recently when the procedures have become more clear and training has been provided – this is in need of improvement which the district is showing.

Validation Results

The monitoring team agrees with the steering committee that evaluation and reevaluation instruments met the minimum requirements.

The monitoring team was not able to validate the steering committee's findings concerning written notice and consent for evaluation and reevaluation.

Out of Compliance: Needs Assistance

ARSD 24:05:25:04.02 Determination of needed evaluation data. As part of an initial evaluation, if appropriate, the individual education program team required by § 24:05:27:01.01 and other individuals with knowledge and skills necessary to interpret evaluation data, determine whether the child has a disability, and determine whether the child needs special education and related services, as appropriate, shall:

(1) Review existing evaluation data on the child, including:

(a) Evaluations and information provided by the parents of the child;

Based on file reviews, the monitoring team found the Vermillion School District has not consistently documented parental input into the evaluation planning process.

ARSD 24:05:30:04 Prior notice and parent consent

Informed parental consent must be obtained before conducting a first-time evaluation, reevaluation, and before initial placement of a child in a program providing special education or special education and related services. Parental consent is not required before:

- (1) Reviewing existing data as part of an evaluation or reevaluation; or
- (2) Administering a test or other evaluation that is administered to all children unless, before administration of that test or evaluation, consent is required of parents of all children.

ARSD 24:05:25:04 Evaluation procedures

School districts shall ensure, at a minimum, that evaluation procedures include the following:

- (7) The child is assessed in all areas related to the suspected disability, including, as applicable, health, vision, hearing, social and emotional status, general intelligence, academic performance, communicative status, and motor abilities;

The monitoring team found that transition evaluations were sometimes being completed, but there was no parent permission to administer the assessments. Evaluations are being administered without consent from parents, and evaluations listed on the prior notice are not being given. Written reports are not being generated on the transition assessment and given to the parents. Functional evaluations were not found in the evaluation process.

CRF 300:324:95. Development, review, and revision of IEP. Consolidation of IEP Team meetings.

To the extent possible, the public agency must encourage the consolidation of reevaluation meetings for the child and other IEP Team meetings for the child.

The monitoring team found several files which included reevaluations were conducted following the annual IEP. The IEP was not rewritten at that time, therefore; requiring another meeting to meet the annual review date. There were also several meetings which were conducted to change eligibility at times other than following a reevaluation or an annual review.

Needs Intervention: Out of Compliance **24:05:22:03. Certified child.**

A certified child is a child in need of special education or special education and related services who has received a multidisciplinary evaluation and has an Individual Education Program formulated and approved by a local placement committee. Documentation supporting a child's disabling condition as defined by Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act must be maintained by the school district for verification of its annual federal child count. This definition applies to all eligible children ages 3 to 21, inclusive, and to only those children under the age of 3 who are in need of prolonged assistance.

The monitoring team identified the following:

Student 36 is reported as a student with a multiple disabilities in the areas of Other Health Impaired and Speech and Language on the child count. The educational impact of this child is not evident within the evaluation data or the IEP goals. The IEP also indicates physical therapy and adaptive PE, but there is no evaluation in this area or goals on the IEP.

Student 9 is reported as a student with a developmental delay; however the evaluation does not support this eligibility. None of the student's scores are one and one-half standard deviations or more below the mean.

Student 8 is not identified on the 2005 child count, but the file indicates a disability in the area of learning disabilities. The evaluation does not contain sufficient information or adequate evaluations to support this eligibility category. The educational evaluation conducted (Texas Academic Assessment System TAAS) is not a nationally normed evaluation.

Student 22 is reported as a student with a developmental delay. The evaluation data does not support this category. The student will need to be reevaluated to determine appropriate placement.

Student 33 is reported as a student under the category of Other Health Impaired. The eligibility document identifies the category of Serious Emotional Disturbance. The evaluation data supports Other Health Impairment category but not the Serious Emotional Disturbance category.

Student 27 is identified as a student with a learning disability on the child count. The most recent reevaluation does not contain enough information to support this category. It appears information was not brought forward from previous evaluations.

Student 35 is identified as a student with multiple disabilities in the areas of speech and Other Health Impaired. The evaluation data does not support these categories, but appears to support placement under the category of Learning Disabilities in the area of Listening Comprehension based on the discrepancy between General Ability Index and the Oral and Written Language scores. The student may then receive speech/language services as a related service with adequate functional information to support this decision.

Student 24 is identified as a student with Autism. The most recent reevaluation does not contain enough information to support this category. It appears information was not brought forward from previous evaluations.

Student 33 is identified as a student with multiple disabilities under the categories of Orthopedically Impaired and Speech. The most recent reevaluation does not contain enough information to support this category. It appears information was not brought forward from previous evaluations.

Principle 4 – Procedural Safeguards

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data Sources Used:

Student File Reviews
Parent Surveys
Comprehensive Plan

Meets requirements

The steering committee concluded the district meets requirements by ensuring that parents are informed of their parental rights under IDEA in their native language or alternative mode of communication.

If a parent cannot be identified, the district ensures a student's rights are protected by providing a surrogate parent.

The steering committee concluded the district by providing parents of children who need special education and/or related services with the opportunity to inspect and review educational records which includes identification, evaluation, and educational placement, and also, the provision of FAPE.

The school district has not had any complaints or due process requests recently, but the comprehensive plan has procedures in place for responding to complaints or requests for due process.

Validation Results

Meets requirements

The monitoring team agrees with all areas identified as meeting requirements for procedural safeguards as concluded by the steering committee.

Principle 5 – Individualized Education Program

The Individualized Education Program (IEP) is a written document for a child with a disability that is developed, reviewed and revised by the IEP team, which includes the parent. The specific areas addressed in principle five are IEP team, IEP content, transition components for secondary IEPs, annual reviews, transition from early intervention program, and IEP related issues.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data Sources Used:

Comprehensive Plan
Student file reviews
Parent Surveys

Meets requirements

The steering committee concluded the district meets requirements for providing written notice for IEP meeting and IEP team membership based on file reviews and information provided from parent and teacher surveys.

The steering committee concluded the district for IEP content based on file reviews which indicated present levels of performance in 10 of 10 files reviewed contained specific skills, parent input in 8 out of 10 files, annual goals linked to present levels, consideration of special facts, configuration of services and written justification for placement.

Needs Improvement

The steering committee concluded the district needs to improve in the area of transition based on student file reviews which indicated 0 of 10 IEPs reviewed for students 16 years old or younger, documented transition goals, services and/or activities needed by the student.

Validation Results

Meets requirements

The monitoring team agrees the district meets requirements in the areas of written notice for IEP and IEP team membership.

The monitoring team was not able to validate the area of transition. Based on the file reviews conducted, the district is demonstrating transition goals and services and/or activities which are needed by the student to promote movement. Transition evaluation is addressed in Principle Three. This area will be moved to meets requirements

Out of compliance: Needs Assistance

ARSD 24:05:27:01.03 Content of individualized education program (IEP) Present level of academic achievement and functional performance and annual goals

A student's IEP must contain present levels of academic achievement and functional performance based upon the skill areas affected by the student's identified disability. The present levels of academic achievement and functional performance are based upon the functional assessment information gathered during the comprehensive evaluation process.

The monitoring team found student files lacked the required content in the PLAAFPs including specific skill area(s) affected by the student's disability, to include strengths and needs, along with how the disability affects the student's involvement in the general curriculum and parent input. PLAAFP's did not contain specific skills. For example, " Weaknesses: staying on task, completing work, reading – currently at and end of 1st to beginning 2nd grade level" , "easily frustrated, reading decoding". File reviews indicated functional assessments are not being completed to acquire the skill-based information to develop present levels of academic achievement and functional performance for students eligible for special education services. Annual goals did not consistently specify measurable skills. For example, "Will complete assignments 80% of the time for the duration of the IEP". "Will do

math at a second grade level with 90% accuracy 4 out of 5 times". "Will improve gross motor". "Will hand in assignments on time with 100% accuracy." "Will increase school readiness by November 2007." "Will demonstrate improved language skills by 11-2007."

ARSD 24:05:25:12 Written Report for Specific Learning Disabilities

The team shall prepare a written report of the results of the evaluation for specific learning disabilities. The report must include a statement of the following:

- (1) Whether the child has a specific learning disability;
- (2) The basis for making the determination;
- (3) The relevant behavior noted during the observation of the child;
- (4) The relationship of that behavior to the child's academic functioning;
- (5) The educationally relevant medical findings, if any;
- (6) Whether there is a severe discrepancy between achievement and ability which is not correctable without special education and related services; and
- (7) The determination of the team concerning the effects of environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantage.

The monitoring team found the multi-disciplinary team report did not contain enough information to determine the basis for making a determination as to the specific area of disability the individual qualified. The scores from the evaluation were present in the report, but it did not specify what type of a discrepancy or regression was necessary to identify the areas of disability.

Principle 6 – Least Restrictive Environment

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data Sources Used:

Comprehensive Plan
Educator Surveys
Student File Review
State Data

Meets requirements

The steering committee concluded the district meets requirements by ensuring that all children receive services in the least restrictive environments with the supports they need for successful participation.

Validation Results

Meets Requirements

The monitoring team agrees with all areas identified as meeting requirements under least restrictive environment.